

**Key Point  
Summary**

## Module 2—Health Literacy

*The key points to take away from this module are:*

- 🔑 Health literacy impacts health outcomes, health care costs, and quality of care
- 🔑 Limited health literacy is more common than you may realize
- 🔑 According to the American Medical Association, poor health literacy is “a stronger predictor of a person’s health than age, income, employment status, education level, and race”
- 🔑 Health literacy is defined as the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand the basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions
- 🔑 A person’s health literacy level affects his or her ability to use the health care system
- 🔑 Health literacy is not a static trait
- 🔑 Multiple factors influence health literacy, including:
  - ♦ Patient-provider communication skills
  - ♦ Patient knowledge of health topics
  - ♦ Culture
  - ♦ Requirements of the health care system
  - ♦ Situation and context
  - ♦ Disabilities
- 🔑 Health literacy should be an issue of concern for all health care providers

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- 🔑 There are four types of literacy that play a role in health literacy:
  - ◆ Fundamental literacy
  - ◆ Scientific literacy
  - ◆ Civic literacy
  - ◆ Cultural literacy
- 🔑 Patients with limited health literacy can be difficult to identify—you can't tell by looking
- 🔑 There are several tools/techniques you can use to help identify health literacy, including:
  - ◆ Knowing the population groups at high risk for limited literacy skills
  - ◆ Recognizing the red flags
  - ◆ Conducting a brown-bag medication review
  - ◆ Conducting a Newest Vital Sign assessment
  - ◆ Conducting a REALM assessment
  - ◆ Conducting a TOFHLA assessment
- 🔑 When dealing with patients with limited health literacy, you should adapt your communication techniques
  - ◆ Provide a simple and clear message to help patients understand better the medical issues involved and to follow instructions
- 🔑 The following basic methods can help improve communication with patients
  - ◆ Slow down
  - ◆ Use plain, non-medical language
  - ◆ Show or draw pictures
  - ◆ Limit the amount of information provided, and repeat it
  - ◆ Produce easy-to-read written materials
  - ◆ Confirm the patient's understanding of your message
  - ◆ Create a shame-free environment
  - ◆ Address the needs of patients with disabilities